

AGENDA ITEM VII B

MISCELLANEOUS ACADEMIC REPORT

LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

**PROGRESS REPORT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON BLINDNESS**

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At its meeting of October 24, 2002, the Board of Regents acted as follows:

Full approval is granted for the proposed Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness at Louisiana Tech University for a period of three years, effective immediately. Beginning October 1, 2003 and on that date for two years thereafter, the University shall submit an annual report to the Commissioner of Higher Education, updating operations of the Institute and documenting efforts to attract other sources of external funding.

STAFF SUMMARY

A report addressing concerns cited in the staff summary of October 23, 2003, was received on November 4, 2003.

I. Institute Operations

Activities of the Institute have been expanded substantially since its inception.

A. Educational Programs

1. The Master in Education with Certification in Teaching Blind Students (TBS) Program admitted students in September, 2002 and will have its first two graduates this semester.
2. Students enrolled in the TBS program can take additional Orientation and Mobility courses and internship to obtain the National Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Certification. This dual certification program allows Master's students to enter the field as certified Teachers of Visually Impaired Children and as certified O&M instructors.
3. Recruitment efforts have increased enrollment to 12 full-time graduate students.
4. Development of the Master's of Rehabilitation Counseling Program has been postponed due to the departure of experienced faculty. However, an Intergovernmental Personnel Act agreement between the Institute and the US Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration (USDERSA) has recently provided a staff member at the Institute who will lead efforts to develop this program.

5. In the Spring of 2004, the Institute will host a statewide conference entitled "From Cradle to Career: the ABC's of Blindness" which will target the population of teachers, other field professionals and parents of blind children.
6. An in-service training for students and faculty at LA Tech introduced information about Disabilities Studies Education. Two O&M seminars were held for students and faculty at LA Tech and Grambling Universities.
7. In October 2003, the Institute conducted a training conference for O&M professionals seeking certification (NOMC) from the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB). The Institute will continue to conduct these training seminars. Currently, the Institute on Blindness at LA Tech is the only university program which utilizes the "Structured Discovery" method of O&M training.
8. The National Conference on Disability Studies Education (DSE) was co-hosted by the Blindness Institute and National-Louis University in Chicago. The next national DSE conference is planned in Ruston, LA, in February 2004.

B. Internal Development

1. The Institute staff was advised to recruit and coordinate participation of leading professionals in blindness who can assist in course and program development. An impressive cadre of professionals associated with the Institute was included in the report.
2. Presentations by Institute staff demonstrate their leadership and presence in an assortment of conferences. Staff collaboration with other blindness professionals to produce and publish books and monographs were documented in the report.
3. An Institute website, www.instituteonblindness.latech.edu has been developed, which includes continually updated resources and information as well as comprehensive bibliographies on O&M and Braille.
4. Over 2,000 volumes, including print and Braille are now in the Institute's Research Library on Blindness, which is equipped with adaptive equipment for use by blind researchers.

C. Research Projects

1. Two proposals for research conducted by non-institute faculty in the College of Education were funded. These projects are expected to promote the Institute's efforts to change the traditional socially constructed view of blindness in order to empower the visually impaired to become contributing members of society.
2. An O&M graduate evaluated the NOMC examination, with recommendations for refinement and restructuring.
3. The third phase of the NOMC project, a method for assessing independent living, is underway. The research to complete this component of the project will be completed during the next reporting period.

4. A “Blind Online Learners” project addresses the experience of being a blind online student. Reports and three DVDs (with audio alternate formats) have resulted from portions of this research.
5. The Institute has developed the structure for ACE-IT (Achieving Customer Empowerment through Immersion Training) seminars which will provide immersion experience in blindness for professionals across the nation. These seminars will be conducted in connection with the Louisisana Center for the Blind.

II. External Funding

Current and projected efforts of the Institute on Blindness to secure external support are documented in the chart below.

Year	Grant	Source	Funded	Denied	To be submitted
2003	Math/ Science	USDE	\$49,675		
2003	Spec. Ed. Person. Prep.	USDE		1,142,000	
2003	Orient/Mobili Instr Prep	Utah Dept Ed		43,500	
2003	Immersion Training in Blindness	USDE		300,000	
2003	Reducing Attitudinal Barriers in Workplace	NIDRR		729,500	
03-04	Long Term Training	USDE-RSA			5 yrs@ 100,000/yr
03-04	Rehab Prof Immersion Train	IES			Multi yr @ 150,000/yr
03-04	Math/Science Ed	NIDRR			150,000
03-04	Blind Adult Literacy	NIDRR			300,000
03-04	Reducing Attitudinal Barriers in Workplace	NIDRR			700,000
	Total		\$ 49,675	\$ 2,215,000	\$ 1,400,000

STAFF ANALYSIS

Internal operations of the Institute are progressing well and reflect stated goals and objectives appropriately. It is probably premature to judge whether the Institute will be successful in attracting sizeable amounts of external support. The Committee should await the second progress report, due next year, before making a judgement in that regard.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee receive the 2003 Progress Report from Louisiana Tech University Relative to Implementation of the Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness. As previously stipulated by the Board of Regents, a second progress report shall be due by October 1, 2004.